MU of VIRGINIA

PHI BETA KAPPA

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE and STATE UNIVERSITY

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA, 24061-0405

**John D. Wilson Essay Contest 2024**

**CONTEST RULES**

In 1984, Phi Beta Kappa’s Mu of Virginia Chapter established the John D. Wilson Essay Contest to recognize excellence in undergraduate writing. All current undergraduate students at Virginia Tech interested in competing for this prize are asked to submit an analytical or interpretive essay, as stipulated by the explanation and rules below.

The selection committee will award a prize of $500 for the best essay. The winning essayist will also be honored at an upcoming Phi Beta Kappa event. All interested undergraduate students should read the following criteria and rules carefully.

Deadline for Submission: All essays must be emailed to Shelia Collins ([shcolli4@vt.edu](mailto:shcolli4@vt.edu)), Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, **no later than 5 PM, Friday, March 29, 2024**.

*Contest Rules (1–8):*

1. The essay for this contest should be an analytical or interpretive composition posing an argument or presenting a point of view. It must be written for a well-educated lay audience. Essays must be between 1,500 and approximately 3,000 words in length. The following criteria and rules must inform the composition.
2. The submitted essay must be the original work of the author, written while the author was an undergraduate at Virginia Tech. Work previously presented for academic credit is eligible.
3. The student must be enrolled as an undergraduate at Virginia Tech during spring 2024 in order to be eligible for the prize.
4. Students may submit only one essay each year.
5. Prior recipients of this prize and essays that have won major Virginia Tech writing prizes are ineligible for the competition.
6. Submissions may not be fiction, poetry, drama, a web site, highly technical, only a report of empirical research, or only a review or synthesis of the existing literature on a subject. The committee reserves the right to reject submissions that, in their opinion, do not constitute essays.
7. Submissions must be in .doc/.docx file format; double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-pt. font; contain page numbers in the upper right-hand corner; and emailed to Shelia Collins at [shcolli4@vt.edu](mailto:shcolli4@vt.edu).
8. The official entry form (available at [VT PBK’s Awards website](https://www.provost.vt.edu/phi_beta_kappa/pbk_awards.html)) must accompany each essay. **The entrant’s name must appear only on the official entry form; the entrant’s name and any identifying information must not appear on the pages of the essay**.

*Essays will be judged according to the following criteria (1–6):*

1. Insightful, thoughtful, and knowledgeable discussion.
2. Coherence of the argument
3. Clear, logical organization
4. Forceful, fresh, compelling, and competent prose
5. Comprehensibility to the well-educated lay reader
6. Accurate spelling, punctuation, grammar, and proofreading

Phi Beta Kappa reserves the right to withhold the award if none of the entries meets contest standards and to rescind any award if the winning essay is later shown not to conform to Contest Rule 3, 4, 5 or 6 above.

Address questions to Shelia Collins, Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Admissions, 104 Burruss Hall (0717), [shcolli4@vt.edu](mailto:shcolli4@vt.edu)*.*

For information about the [Phi Beta Kappa Society](https://www.pbk.org/), contact Shaila Mehra, President, Mu of Virginia PBK, [shailamehra@vt.edu](mailto:shailamehra@vt.edu).